

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY OFFERS AMENDMENT TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY RESEARCH

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today offered an amendment to a federal appropriations bill that would increase the U.S. Department of Energy's budget for renewable energy technology by \$50 million. The funds provided by the Hinchey amendment would be used to advance research and development of alternative energy sources. The increase would be offset by a reduction in the growth of spending on nuclear weapons.

"President Bush's energy policy strongly encourages alternative sources like wind, biomass, and solar energy," said Hinchey. "But his budget request decimated funding for research and development of these technologies. I commend my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee for restoring the funding that the administration eliminated. But simply repairing the damage done by the president's proposal is an inadequate response. To address the national energy crisis, we need to make the investment necessary to get these technologies out of the lab and into use."

Despite the rhetoric of the Bush Administration's energy policy, its budget request called for severe cuts in funding for renewable energy. The House Appropriations Committee has provided an additional \$100 million for these programs in the fiscal year 2002 Energy and Water Appropriations bill, bringing funding back up to its FY 2001 level but failing to keep pace with inflation. The Hinchey amendment would add \$50 million for solar energy research, geothermal technology, wind energy research, and biomass and biofuels.

The Energy Appropriations bill increases funding for nuclear weapons by \$118 million to \$5.1 billion. However, the Department of Energy has been unable to justify such an increase and has indicated that the fate of nuclear weapons will be determined by the Secretary of Defense's ongoing Strategic Defense Review.

"There is no good basis for appropriating an additional \$118 million for nuclear weapons in this bill," Hinchey added. "In fact there is considerable uncertainty about the need to increase nuclear funding at all. On the other hand, the administration has acknowledged that we are facing a national energy crisis. If we are serious about addressing this crisis, then we should increase our commitment to renewable energy technologies."

The votes on the Hinchey amendment and the Energy and Water Appropriations bill are expected to take place early Wednesday evening.